Disconnection of Phones

677. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the aews-item published in Delhi Times dated 30th October, 1999 under the heading "Phone (Y) Bills; in disconnection with MTNL", if so, what is the reaction of Government thereto; and

(b) what steps Governemnt have taken or propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) The cases mentioned in the press could not be verified as no details of the concerned Telephone Number were given.

(b) Steps taken/proposed to be taken by MTNL to ensure quick linkages of payments:

(i) Bar Code machines have been installed in many area counters which render the process of updation of payment very quick.

(ii) MTNL has introduced many new payment schemes, offering new methods of payment, viz:

(a) Subscribers can avail pay-in-slips just as in banks. Through this scheme, the payment is updated then and there.

(b) The Electronic Clearance Scheme; Through this scheme, the billed amount is directly debited to the bank account of the subscriber and the payment is also updated in MTNL accounts quickly.

(c) Subscribers can avail of a Voluntary Deposit Scheme in which the subscriber puts some amount as Voluntary Deposit with the MTNL, and the billed amount is adjusted from this, leaving no chance of disconnection. The deposit also earns interest at the rate of 12% per annum.

(d) Subscribers can use their Citi Bank Credit Cards to make payment.

(e) Subscribers can make payment through internet wherein payment updafibn is through electronic media, which eliminates the chances of wrong disconnection.

Creation of New Department of Telecom Services

678. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH SURYA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that another Department has been created as Department of Telcom Services apart from DoT;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof;

(c) where shall it draw its personnel from; and

(d) whether it is not against the Government policy of downsizing of administration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. In March, 1999, Government announced the New Telecom Policy (NTP) which *inter-alia* states as follows:

"The Government has decided to separate the policy and licensing functions of the Department of Telecommunications from the service provision functions as a precursor to corporatisation."

In pursuance of the above objective, the Government has created on 15-10-1999, the Department of Telecom Services, and allocated to it the service provision functions previously being handled by the Department of Telecommunications. Bulk of the Staff and officers of the erstwhile Department of Telecom are doing the work in the newly created Department of Telecom Services, and as such there has been no new addition.

Performance of Calcutta Telephone District

679. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the latest Comptroller and Auditor General report on the telecom sector for the financial year 1997-98 has revealed that the performance of the Calcutta Telephone District was the poorest in all respects among the metros and also compared to the all India average for the various telecom circles with respect to